

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

ENGLISH NATION.

Saturday, February 2. 1706.

I Have been told, since I began this Subject, that I am pursuing popular Arguments with an ill Design, and that this Discourse of Mourning, is calculated to move the Rabble, and raise the Mob against the Court, as if the Practice of her Majesty's Household was ruinous to Trade, and help'd forward the Misery of her Subjects.

I am in this Paper subjected to more foolish Objections than any Man I believe ever met with on any Publick Occasion; and yet so much Malice is mingled with the Folly of the Objectors, that there seems some Necessity to answer.

Generally all our Mistakes in Argument, at least such as are not wilful, arise from a want of distinguishing Right of the Subject we are upon; and therefore to make a just State of this Case, I must turn it another way.

It is true that her Majesty's Command for

regulating the Customs of Mourning in the Royal Household, would be an effectual Checque to this Misfortune, and I have been Discouraging of it as the best, readiest and most direct Step to relieve the immediate Distress which Trade suffers, and which the Poor feel in the Common Calamity of the Publick; but pray, Gentlemen, take this along with you too, that I no where say 'tis the only way to cure it; I grant her Majesty can do it with the Breath of her Mouth, but I must tell you, you may do it your selves if you please; and therefore there's no Ground for Mobbing the Government, and the Calumny is meerly malicious, and indeed so trifling, that it hardly requires any farther Reply: However, since I write to a carping, captious Generation, and Evil is every day suggested out of the best design'd Steps any Man can take, I shall go on a little

in one Paper, more to tell the World how they may do all this Work of themselves, without so much as putting her Majesty to the Trouble of taking any notice of it.

I confess my self very much of their Opinion who say, that all our Civil Mischiefs lie at our own Door, I do not deny particular Exceptions to this, as to most General Rules; but in the Case before me it is very demonstrably true.

Here we cry out of the Publick Grievance upon the occasion of Mourning, and not without Cause, as has been plainly made out; but where lies the Fault? I have indeed talk'd of your Addressing and representing the Grievance to her Majesty, and 'tis the right way; but without this I am now upon, your Address imports no more than to desire her Majesty that her Royal Command, may be issued out to prevent her Subjects being Fools.

Was ever a more preposterous Folly seen in the World? We are all convinc'd that a Publick Mourning is ruinous and destructive to Trade; and whence comes it to pass? The Queen lays no Injunction upon the People to wear Black, the Civilities and Ceremonies of Courts, oblige the Queen and the Household to go into Mourning; but what's this to the General Head of Trade? 'Tis imitating this in the general Habit in the Nation is the Evil; and whose Fault, whose Act and Deed is that? Is it not your own? Do you not destroy your selves, and stab the very Vitals of your Trade, in following the Example of those you have no manner of reason to imitate, and that do not desire you to imitate them?

'Tis true, Custom makes it indecent to go to Court in Colours, when the Court is in Black; but Custom again can alter that Indecency: And why should not Trade, and the General Interest alter that Custom?

But suppose, which is the worst can be said, That all that go to Court must go in Black; What a Trifle is all that to the General Trade of this Nation? What Part can any Man imagine it would bear in the General Quantity of Manufactures worn in this Kingdom? Not above one to a hundred. The Mischief therefore is among our selves,

that we will fall into a Fashion, tho' it be entirely Destructive to our Country, Pernicious to Trade, and Ruinous to the Poor.

I formerly took leave to be a little merry with this matter, tho' the Subject is really Melancholy, that at the same time that we find a General Complaint of the Loss of our Trade, by reason of the Mournings, we find the very Tradesmen that complain, and their Families all in black; why really Gentlemen, if you will do so, right or wrong, never complain of the Decay of your Trade, never send your Petitions to the Parliament, or your Address to the Queen; for why should you trouble her Majesty for that which you can bring to pass without it?

If you will have the Affair check'd, desire the Weavers in *Splitle Fields*, &c. to draw up a Petition to the Mercers on *Ludgate-Hill*, and the *Lady-makers* in *Pater-Noster-Row*, &c. to wear no Black, not to go in Mourning themselves, and follow a destructive Mode that ruins Trade; from thence let them go to the *Turky-Merchants*, *Throsters* and *Silk-men*, and petition them, to let their Wives and Daughters go out of Mourning, that they may not put their own hands to the Ruine of the Silk Manufacture.

Let them then remind the Nobility and Gentry, That if Manufactures die, and Trade decays, Wool will be a Drug; the Tenants cannot pay Rent, and their Estates must sink of Course: One General Reflection upon the fatal Consequences of these things, would make the whole Nation Abjure Black, and resolve to go no more into Mourning, hardly upon private Occasions.

Were there a Plague in the Nation, and should some skilful Physician give it as his Opinion, That there was some poisonous Contagious Effluvium in the Drug, with which the Black was died, which, being worn on the Body, endanger'd the Health, and subjected us to an Intestion, how universally would all People throw by their Black Cloaths, and shun the Company of any that did not, as a Person infected and dangerous.

Why really, Gentlemen, there is a mortal

tal Contagion in this Unhappy Colour, that is Fatal to our Trade; the Prosperity of which, is the Health of the Nation; and will you not shun the Infection? 'Tis in your Power to stop the spreading of this Disease, and Check the Influence of it upon the whole Nation, and the Difficulty is nothing but throwing off your Black Cloaths.

What need you be concer'd for what the Court Wears, or all those that are, or would be thought to belong to it? the Habits of the Royal Household Vary every Month, or as often as the Superiour Direction appoints; but the Custom of going all like the Court, has nothing in it but meer Contagion, and a fatal Malignancy as to Trade; and if you Harbour the Infection, your Trade will and must Dye of the Plague.

I could be very Pleasant here upon the Vanity of our People, in being willing to be thought to have some Business at Court, or to know how all was Transacted there; but as this is Remote to the present Case, and too Diverting, I omit it.

You see the Grievance is of your own Creating, the Plague is begun in your own Families; Cure it there first, I dare say, the Magnitude of Trade, and its dependencies are such, and so considerable, that the People are able, by Universal Regulations, to Govern Trade; and if all that are concern'd in Trade, or concern'd for it, would set their Hands to Reform the Practice, the Work would be done, and there would be no need to give Her Majesty the Trouble of an Address.

Nor is it needful to Prescribe Methods how this may done; I confess we are in England a Nation of no manner of Concert; no General Understanding or Conjunction of Interest, and so no Universal immediate Consent, can be expected in any thing for Publick Good; but methinks something might be contriv'd, to make a Woman Laugh'd at, that was seen in Black Cloaths, Close Mourning excepted; and that is not pleasant enough to be fear'd.

I cannot think of Proposing, to have the Mob throw Dirt or Stones at the Ladies;

I am for no Mob Methods in any Case whatever; but is there no way to render Black peculiarly Odious and Unpleasant to the People? is it not enough to make it hateful viz. That it will Ruine all our Trade? methinks a Nation so involv'd in Trade as this is, should want no Excitings to so great a Work, and which by but a Breath of Custom, would turn the whole Scale of Trade in such a Prodigious Manner; you Cry out of the Fashion; Pray, Gentlemen; what Fashion do you go in your selves, and how does it become a Fashion? Let us examine this Matter, and if the Tradesmen are found Authors, or Promoters of the Grievance, let us consider who they ought to Blame.

There are in this City and its Adjacencies, without troubling Political Arithmetick, 50000 Families that depend upon Trade; tho' every one of these Families, are not immediately dependent upon that part of Trade, which is directly concern'd in the Wearing Part; yet all Branches of Trade have such a Connexion of Interest, that no considerable part can suffer, without Influencing others; and I think there needs no Explication of that Assertion, or to tell the World, that if a Thousand Mercers, Lacemen, Milliners, &c. decay, all the Families, who Labour under them Decay, and all the Trades that these dealt with, feel the want of that Trade, their usual Expence occasion'd.

If in this City, and its Adjacent parts, 50000 Families depend on Trade; I affirm, that those 50000 Families, resolving for the Publick Advantage of Trade, to Wear no Black Cloths, nor to Trade with any that do, are able by such a Concert, to Govern the Fashion it self, and Suppress the Mischief.

I might proceed to other Agreements in Trade, and a Universal Crying down the Wearing of Black among the People; That the Dyers should agree to dye no Black Cloth, Stuff, Wool, or Silk; the Weavers to Weave none for such a time, or for so many Years; that those who being closely concern'd in the Damage of this Custom, leave it off themselves, should lay out none of their Money with any Shop.